

## **NEW BOATING AND SWIMMING ZONES IMPLEMENTATION**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

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#### **Why change existing boating and swimming zones?**

There was a need to simplify existing Boating Zones in Port Phillip and Western Port bays. Currently there are a large number of complex zones that are difficult for both swimmers and water-craft users to understand, and do not reflect changing trends in boating and swimming activity.

Parks Victoria (PV), the local port manager for Port Phillip and Western Port bays, in conjunction with Transport Safety Victoria has undertaken an extensive review of the existing zones to create new zones that are safe and easy to comprehend for all bay users. Transport Safety Victoria (TSV) oversee the management of all recreational boating across Victoria.

The aim of the review was to determine what re-zoning was necessary in each local area to allow safe access and use of the coast and waterways.

Following extensive community consultation a standard set of zones and criteria for applying them was established. Parks Victoria is working in partnership with TSV and in consultation with the local community to implement the new zones.

#### **What are the outcomes of the review?**

The key recommendations from reviewing each local area include:

- The realignment and simplification of zones to become clearer and more user-friendly;
- Increased swimmer safety from consistent 'No Boating' zones in front of Life Saving Clubs;
- The introduction of 'Shared Wind Sports' areas to allow kite-boarding, sail boarding and other wind based boating to be undertaken safely and legally;
- Removing 'No Sailboard, 'Sailboards Only', 'No PWC or Sailboards' and 'PWC Only'; zones to reflect changing water activities and avoid duplication with other zone types; and
- The revising of the 5 knot zone between Safety Beach and Blairgowrie from 760m from shore to 500m from shore.

#### **Who is affected by the changes to the boating and swimming zones?**

Anyone who swims or undertakes a recreational boating activity on Port Phillip or Western Port may be affected by the boating and swimming zone changes.

#### **What is the definition of a boat in relation to 'boating' and 'no boating' zones?**

In the context of a 'boating' or 'no boating' zone, a boat is a vessel or craft which is navigable or steerable and is used to travel on water. This includes motor boats, sail boats or yachts, canoes with oars, Personal Water Crafts (jet skis), kite boards, kayaks. In this context, a water toy such as an inflatable floating device, body board or surf board. is not considered a boat.

### **How will the changes affect Personal Water Craft (Jet Skis)?**

Personal Water Craft (PWC), as with many types of boating vessels can present safety risks to other bay users. Consequently some current Jet Ski zones will become 'no boating' zones. Simplification of zone types will make it easier for PWC operators to understand, and comply with the new regulations.

A PWC is a legitimate recreational vessel. The revised Boat Zone criteria *does not* differentiate between PWCs and other vessels. Currently, all vessels are restricted to 5 knots within 200m of the coast line, within 50m of a swimmer, or within 100m of a dive flag. These regulations remain unchanged and clearer 'no boating' zones will provide safer options for swimmers.

### **Personal Water Craft are noisy and annoying. Was excessive noise taken into consideration in reviewing the zones?**

Safety was the primary focus when reviewing existing boating and swimming zones. However as the technology used in constructing PWCs continues to improve, the vessel's noise will be considerably reduced.

### **How long will it take to implement the new boating and swimming zones?**

Parks Victoria will implement the new zones across all of Port Phillip and Western Port over a few years. The first stage was implemented in December 2010 between St Kilda and Port Melbourne. The second stage of implementation will occur over summer 2012 for Werribee River, Phillip Island and Dromana to Blairgowrie with further zones in East Port Phillip proposed for later in the year. The rest of the zones are being progressively introduced in coming years.

### **Why doesn't Parks Victoria implement all the new boating and swimming zones at the same time?**

Removing old signage and navigational aids and installing new infrastructure requires considerable resources. To ensure all new zones are implemented effectively, resources will be allocated on a zone by zone basis.

### **How will the new boating and swimming zones resolve problems between bay users?**

Clearer zones and designated spaces for recreational activities will create an environment where they won't conflict with each other.

All Boating activities, whether they are motorised boats, personal water craft, sail boats or even a canoe can present a danger to swimmers. Clearly separating the activities clearly reduces the likelihood of injury to swimmers, and conflict between water users.

### **Can Parks Victoria guarantee the new zones will be an improvement on existing zones?**

Signage and navigation aids in the new zones will be significantly clearer and easier to identify. Changes to the zones are based on current and predicted demands and specifically designed to separate swimmers and boating activity. The new zones are reflective of public demand as extensive community consultation over 2 years has been incorporated into the planning process. Ranger observations and trends in recreational activities on the water were also determining factors.

### **What are the different types of zones and what do they mean?**

There are three new zones. They are:

- No Boating – Swimming zone where boating is not permitted;
- Boating Only – Boating zone where swimming is not permitted; and
- 200m from shore – Boating is limited to speeds of 5 knots.

Other zones specific zones such as PWC or sailboard zones will now be incorporated into the 'Boating Only' category.

### **Are there any exemptions to the new zones?**

The only exemption to the above zones is a zone called 'Shared wind sports Area'. This zone has been introduced to create a safe area for kite-boarders and sail boarders. Sail boarding and kite-boarding are becoming increasingly popular, necessitating the creation of a designated area. Commercial Port Zones and restricted zones still apply for commercial shipping and Port Security and remain unchanged.

### **Will Parks Victoria fine people for not complying with the new zones?**

In the first instance, Parks Victoria will take an educative approach. However the zones will be marked clearly and people deliberately and consistently not complying with the zones will be fined by Parks Victoria Rangers or the Water Police.

### **How will I know if I'm in a boating or swimming zone?**

Clearly marked aids to navigation and signage will advise water and foreshore-based users of what zone they are in. As individual zones are implemented, a 'Notice to Mariners' will be issued by Parks Victoria, who will also undertake zone-specific and generalised education campaigns.

### **Why didn't Parks Victoria consult me before implementing the new boating and swimming zones?**

Parks Victoria recognised the potential impact on recreational users of Port Phillip and Western Port and undertook an extensive public consultation campaign to ensure the needs of all recreational groups were considered, however, due to the scope of the review, it was not possible to consult with every member of the community individually. The process was extensive with over 200 public submissions received during the campaign period of November and December, 2008.

Parks Victoria advertised the boat zone review proposals in the Herald Sun, Geelong Advertiser and Phillip Island Advertiser. There was also significant media coverage during this period.

### **Who did Parks Victoria consult?**

Over the past two years Parks Victoria has been directly approaching user groups, clubs, local government, state government agencies and the community to discuss the requirements and potential impacts for the boat zone review to ensure the best possible outcome for everyone. Parks Victoria made a number of recommendations following the public consultation process. These recommendations were put forward to Transport Safety Victoria for approval.

### **Why are Parks Victoria trying to stop us enjoying swimming or boating on Port Phillip and Western Port?**

The changes are focused on creating safer and more enjoyable zones for all bay users. Separating activities such as swimming from water skiing or boating will create a safer and more enjoyable environment for boaters and swimmers.

**What criteria was used to establish priorities**

The zones were prioritised according to level of usage and potential for accidents.

**How will I know when the new zones have been introduced in my area?**

When the new signage and navigation markers are installed, the new zones will be legally signed off by the state government, replacing existing zones. The new zones will then be enforceable by law.

Implementation of the new zones will be advertised in the local media, and information will be distributed to clubs and councils and local business servicing bay users.

**Will I still be able to walk my dog in the same area?**

A 'boating only' zone will not alter current access for dog walkers and water play for dogs on the beach where dog walking is permitted.

**Where can I get more information about the new zones?**

Detailed information and maps of the new zones are available on the Parks Victoria website [www.parks.vic.gov.au](http://www.parks.vic.gov.au) or by calling the Parks Victoria information centre on 13 1963.